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A mercenary, released after 6 years in an Angolan prison, says that he and other prisoners were once marched to a wall for execution but the shooting was called off at the last moment.

"Afterward it was always in the backs of our minds," Gary Acker, 27, said in a weekend interview.

Acker returned home last week after he and two other soldiers of fortune were freed in an exchange for three Soviet soldiers held by South Africa.

He said that in 1977 rebel soldiers took over his prison during an aborted revolt. He said they took the European mercenaries out of their cells and marched them to a wall to be shot. But, he said, at the last moment the execution was called off.

"They were there to kill us," he said.

Acker previously said he was recruited by the Central Intelligence Agency and was to be paid \$500 a week to fight the communists in Angola.

However, he said in the interview that he would not discuss CIA involvement until he is debriefed by the State Department next week.

Acker had expected to be executed when he was captured, but he was spared because of his age. One of four mercenaries killed after a trial was Daniel Gearhart of Maryland. He said Gearhart was killed "because he spoke against the communists."

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